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ABSTRACT

The leadership variables of "consideration" and "structure" have been identified as two important factors in previous research. To obtain information on how chief student personnel administrators (CSPA) viewed the supervision of professional subordinates in large, public universities, a nationwide survey was taken during the 1978 school year. CSPAs (N=96) completed the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire (LOQ) and the Graduate Academic Degrees Questionnaire (GADQ). The LOQ was used to ascertain respondents' opinions of their "consideration" and "structure" leadership behavior as it related to professional subordinates; the GADQ was used to ascertain selected demographic characteristics of respondents. Background factors selected for examination and believed to affect CSPAs' opinions of their "consideration" and "structure" leader behaviors were: geographical setting, type of training, level of training, recency of degree, and experience as the CSPA. None of these variables was significantly related to the "consideration" or "structure" leader behavior reported by the CSPAs. The major finding reported by CSPAs was that their leadership style in relating to professional subordinates was best represented by high "consideration" scores and low "structure" scores, regardless of educational, geographical, or background factors. The results suggest that the type of leader behavior reported by CSPAs may be dictated by the situation. (Author/NRB)

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Supervision of Professional Subordinates

A Nationwide Survey of Chief Student
Personnel Administrators (CSPA's)
and How They View Their
Interaction with Professional
Subordinates.

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SUPERVISION OF PROFESSIONAL SUBORDINATES

What does a major league manager, a hospital administrator, and a chief student personnel administrator have in common? The answer - the supervision of professional subordinates. The similarity may end at this point - especially when looking at salary disparities between occupations, but, in any case, all three require judgements about the supervision of professional subordinates.

Harlen Cleveland, former presidential advisor and the author of The Future Executive, a book on the future leaders of both the public and private sectors of our nation, has stated that one of the ultimate questions that must be answered by our future leaders in dealing with subordinates is how to reconcile efficiency with humanity. Boles and Davenport (1975) in their book Introduction to Educational Leadership, a review of leadership studies, stated that the terms "task" and "relationships" (very similar to the concepts of "efficiency" and "humanity" as presented by Cleveland) could be used to describe common threads running through a series of leadership studies done at the Ohio State University, the University of Michigan, and Harvard University. Stogdill (1974) in the Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research discovered these same two important leadership variables and identified them as "consideration" and "structure." How CSPA's reconcile the two qualities of "consideration" and "structure" while interacting with professional subordinates was the subject of this investigation.

Methodology

In an attempt to obtain information on how CSPA's view the supervision of professional subordinates in American institutions of higher education, a nationwide study was conducted during the 1978 school year seeking current information about this question. The survey of CSPA's dealt with large, public, urban and non-urban universities. Public universities with 10,000 or more enrolled students were selected for examination because Crookston and Atkyns (1974) had found evidence that large universities were often the trend setters in programs and organizational patterns among student personnel workers in higher education. This selection, of course, limits the possibilities of generalizing to all CSPA's from the data provided by the study.

One-hundred and fifteen potential respondents (fifty-four urban and sixty-one non-urban) were identified from the Education Directory (1977). These CSPA's were sent a packet of materials which included an individually addressed cover letter, self-addressed stamped return envelope, and two test instruments - the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire (LOQ) devised by Edwin A. Fleishman (1969) and the Graduate Academic Degrees Questionnaire (GADQ) designed by the investigators. The LOQ was used to ascertain the respondents' opinions of their "consideration" and "structure" leadership behavior as it related to professional subordinates. Leadership behavior, in this study, referred to the perceived actions taken by CSPA's to influence professional subordinates, a definition borrowed heavily from Stogdill (1974).

The LOQ provides two scores representing "consideration" and "structure." According to Fleishman, "consideration" is defined as the extent to which an individual is likely to have job relationships characterized by mutual trust, respect for ideas, consideration of feelings, and a certain warmth between self and others. A high score, as measured by the LOQ, indicated good rapport and two-way communication. A low score indicates the individual is likely to be more impersonal dealing with group members. In contrast to the people dimension, Fleishman defined "structure" as the extent to which an individual is likely to define and direct the roles of self and others toward goal achievement. A high score, as measured by the LOQ, indicates individuals who play an active role in directing group activities through planning, communicating information, scheduling, criticizing, or trying new ideas. A low score characterizes individuals who are relatively inactive in giving direction in this manner.

An important point made by Fleishman (1969) in the Manual for the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire is that the "halo" and "social desirability" tendencies, common biases in instruments of this type, do not seem to be operating in these scales. Thus, the "social desirability" of consistently choosing the "consideration" variable over the "structure" variable or vice versa is negligible because the statistical analyses run on these variables have resulted in near-zero correlations. Various occupational groups tested have not chosen one variable as being more "desirable" than the other. Careful item analysis and selection of items has resulted in a test instrument that reduces the likelihood of the results being an exercise in self-congratulations.

The Graduate Academic Degrees Questionnaire (GADQ) was used to ascertain selected demographic characteristics of the CSPA's sampled. The GADQ yielded the following results for CSPA's: title held - Vice President for Student Services (76%), Dean of Students (24%); mean age (46.4); age range (33-64); sex - male (89%), female (11%); less than 5 years experience as CSPA (39%), more than 5 years experience as CSPA (61%); mean years of experience (8.7); range of years of experience (1-39); highest degree - Master's (18%), Doctorate (82%); type of degree - non-administrative (58%), administrative (42%); recency of degree - within the last 10 years (27%), more than 10 years ago (73%); setting - urban (47%), non-urban (53%); mean number of students in residence halls - urban settings (2,940), non-urban settings (5,594).

The respondents, who sent back both the LOQ and the GADQ, had their responses coded and keypunched to accommodate input format requirements of the packaged computer program, Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Using a balanced 2⁵ factorial analysis of variance design, significance tests (F-Tests) were computed at the .05 level for overall main and interaction effects between the selected demographic characteristics of CSPA's, as measured by the GADQ, and "consideration" and "structure" as leader behavior variables, as measured by the LOQ. In addition, separate one-way through four-way analyses of variance (ANOVA's) were run on each factor to test for main and interaction effects at all levels.

The response rate was 83% or 96 of 115 possible respondents.

How Chief Student Personnel Administrators View Themselves

A review of the literature on how CSPA's saw their leadership styles in institutions of higher education revealed several articles and periodicals related to the topic. Cheatham (1964) stated, after examining their occupational backgrounds and academic preparation, ". . . the unifying factor is the propensity their backgrounds suggest for 'people oriented' activities." In an article by Frantz (1969) where he examined student personnel workers' undergraduate and graduate fields of study, based on Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice, he determined that student personnel workers were classifiable at the undergraduate level as 41% "Social" in orientation. When examining their graduate level major fields of concentration, he found that 84% could be categorized as "Social." In agreement with Frantz' conclusions, Cameron (1965), using the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB) to test the student personnel deans, found that they were, "oriented toward social service, young people, teaching and the field of education in general. The scales on which they were highest were: social worker, vocational counselor, school superintendent, and minister." In a more recent article by Harway (1977) she described the leadership style of CSPA's as, ". . . most sensitive to personal, humanistic, social and emotional influences and least sensitive to materialistic objects and analytical influences." Further, she indicates, "the human qualities that are often ascribed to individuals in the student personnel field were evident in their responses . . . open, democratic, cooperative with their staffs and concerned about the lives of the students they serve." In general,

Cheatham (1964), Frantz (1969), Cameron (1965), Harway (1977), all concluded that CSPA's are "people oriented," and exemplify "the human qualities that are often ascribed to them."

Results

The background factors selected for examination and believed to affect CSPA's opinions of their "consideration" and "structure" type leader behaviors were: geographical setting (urban versus non-urban), type of training (administrative versus non-administrative), level of training (Master's versus Doctorate), recency of degree (more than versus less than ten years), and experience as the CSPA (more than five years versus less than five years). The most striking finding was that, although all these variables were originally believed to have some affect on leader behavior, none was determined to be related significantly in a statistical manner with the "consideration" or "structure" leader behavior reported by the chief student personnel administrators.

Thirty-two possible main and interactive statistical combinations of these variables were examined at every level through 2⁵th. in an attempt to uncover any existing relationships between background factors and leader behavior - none existed.

The major finding CSPA's reported was that their leadership style in relating to professional subordinates could best be represented by high "consideration" scores and low "structure" scores, regardless of of educational, geographical, and background factors.

Conclusions

In this study, as in others previously mentioned, one may conclude that CSPA's are, on the basis of relatively high "consideration" scores and low "structure" scores, "people persons."

The "people person" orientation may be self-perpetuating, in the sense that the people who go into this field may be doing so as a result of some self-selection process. Consequently, the ones that fit into the "humanistic" leadership style "self-select" into the field. The type of leader behavior reported by CSPA's in institutions of higher education may be dictated by the situation.

Fleishman (1969) made available in the Manual for the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire a list of groups who have been normed on the LOQ. Comparing Fleishman's norms with the ones for the CSPA's in this study yielded the following conclusions: (1) "Consideration" scores for CSPA's are in general greater than or equal to most other normed groups; (2) "structure" scores for those occupations related to education (CSPA's, University Students, Educational Supervisors) are lower, in general, than those outside of education; (3) interestingly, CSPA's, who are the administrators most typically responsible for students in the university setting, are less "structured" than the university students themselves normed in the table; (4) theoretically, according to Fleishman and others, the ideal leader displays both a high "consideration" score and a high "structure" score. In a table presented by Fleishman, this was best illustrated by such groups as Bank Managers and Business Executives. CSPA's, in contrast, show a

generally high "consideration" score, but a low "structure" score. Either CSPA's are effective with high "consideration" scores and low "structure" scores, or they are ineffective, as the theory would lead us to believe, because of their low reported scores on "structure." However, it may, alternatively, be that leaders aren't born but made; they may choose a particular setting because of the pressures and requirements of that situation. In the typical situation of the CSPA, with highly trained and highly motivated subordinates, situational leadership theory might dictate that high "consideration" and low "structure" leader behavior by the CSPA would be most appropriate. In this case, the CSPA's primary function would be to act as a "motivator" and "supporter" of professional subordinates.

If, as Patzer (1972) stated, ". . . in the last analysis, what we are depends on how we see ourselves," then it looks as if CSPA's do see themselves as "humanizing elements" in the higher educational process.

CSPA's either are, as they report themselves to be in many articles, the "humanists" of higher education or, as another possibility, the supreme manipulators; that is, CSPA's may be very proficient at covering up their true actions.

If CSPA's are as they seem and as they report - highly concerned about relationships and not as concerned about tasks - then do they experience some form of what has been termed "cognitive dissonance" on the job? They report a high incidence of "considerate" type leader behavior on the job, yet most higher administrative positions require

a large amount of "structured" type activity. In other words, does their reported "people orientation" conflict with on-the-job administrative pressures and requirements to perform "tasks" in order for them to fulfill their responsibilities?

Cleveland (1972) stated that, ". . . what moves people to action is more hope than fear, not just a vision of how bad things might become, but a vision of how things might be improved." It may be that the responses of the CSPA's in this study were very much a description of how they would ideally like it to be, not how it really is. The way they see themselves may be the "hope" or the "vision" of what they want to become or what they want the higher educational process to become. Leadership begins with a vision, and the leadership necessary to improve the higher educational process may begin with the student personnel profession's "humanistic view" of itself. CSPA's generally believe that they should exemplify a spirit of humanism in their work relationships with professional subordinates.

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